

HOUSING MANAGEMENT

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TENANT SELECTION UNDER THE NEW YORK HOUSING AUTHORITY

In order to clear up some misunderstandings regarding the rules of procedure, the New York City Housing Authority recently issued a statement regarding the standards for selection of tenants for Harlem River Houses.

The only absolute requirements for admission to Harlem River Houses and Williamsburg Houses, it was pointed out, are those set by law which states, "Dwelling accommodations in such low-cost housing or slum-clearance project shall be available only to families who lack sufficient income, without the benefit of financial assistance, to enable them to live in decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings and under other than overcrowded housing conditions: Provided, That no family shall be accepted as a tenant in any such project whose aggregate income exceeds five times the rental of the quarters to be furnished such family."

The announcement states further that there were so many families meeting the preliminary eligibility requirements for residence in all of the Authority's projects that it was difficult to decide arbitrarily which families needed housing most.

"For this reason a point system was set up which acted as a means of weighing the varying degrees of substandard housing. For example, more points were given for living in an old-law tenement than for living in a new-law-tenement in bad repair. A family living under overcrowded housing conditions received credits for this substandard condition, and consideration was also given to families who found it necessary to pay a disproportionately large amount of their income for rent. Additional points were given to families where a health condition was affected or liable to be affected by the location of the dwelling."

In considering a family's ability to pay the rent, evidence of a fairly steady increase also received additional points. Steady income, however, was broadly interpreted and included besides earned income, income from such other sources as the Emergency Relief Bureau, the Board of Child Welfare, the Old-Age Pension Division, and from such private family welfare agencies as the Charity Organization Society.

The majority of the incomes of the families at Harlem River Houses range between \$900 and \$1,500; the largest number of workers are unskilled laborers, who represent 60% of the total of the 705 persons employed; 11.6% can be classified as semi-skilled laborers; 12.2% as skilled laborers. The others are engaged in miscellaneous clerical occupations. Approximately 60% come from old-law houses; 2% from converted dwellings, and the rest from new-law houses. Families who were chosen from new-law houses were either rooming, sharing an apartment or living under overcrowded conditions.

Distribution Policy on Bulletin

This issue of the HOUSING MANAGEMENT BULLETIN is being distributed to all members of NAHO. Thereafter it will be sent only to those members who have asked to receive it. Copies are available to non-members only by purchase of individual issues at 25¢ each.

THE BULLETIN WANTS NEWS, IDEAS, REPORTS, AND OTHER MATERIAL ON MANAGEMENT
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TENANT TURN-OVER IN FEDERAL HOUSING PROJECTS

From time to time rumors have circulated with reference to the eviction of tenants from federal housing projects. In order to obtain an accurate account of this situation, a letter was addressed to Mr. Nathan Straus, Administrator of the United States Housing Authority, by the Assistant Director of the National Association of Housing Officials. The following reply was received from Mr. Straus some weeks ago:

"We have made an analysis of the reasons tenants have vacated the federal projects which have been open for any length of time. The project which has been in operation for the longest period is Techwood Homes which was initially occupied on August 15, 1936. The other projects studied have been occupied for varying periods. There are 6,244 dwelling units in these projects and 460 families have vacated after living in the projects.

"Our records indicate that of these 460 families only 45 were asked to move by the Management and of these only 15 were asked to move for financial reasons. However, 92 families have moved of their own accord for economic reasons. In no case has it been necessary to take legal action against a tenant to force his eviction.

"You can see from the above facts that the question of eviction for non-payment of rent has to date been of minor importance though we must take into consideration that this study covers a period when economic conditions were constantly improving* and in no project have there been at any time a great many families who could not afford to pay the rent. On the whole tenants seem to understand that even though they are living in a government subsidized project, it is necessary that they pay the rent if they wish to remain in the project."

* Cleveland papers of March 8 carried a story quoting United States Attorney Emmerich B. Freed to the effect that petitions would be filed shortly thereafter in the Federal Court asking that 25 tenants in the Cedar Central and Outhwaite projects be ejected for non-payment of rent. This might indicate that improving economic conditions were an important factor in the previous good record of rent payments.- Editors.

CHEATHAM PLACE OPENED

Hundreds of interested persons attended the formal dedication ceremony of Cheatham Place Homes in Nashville, Tennessee, on Sunday, March 6, 1938. This newly completed federal housing project, which consists of 314 dwelling units, occupies a site which was formerly known as "Cab Hollow," a slum area which residents of Nashville are apparently happy to have had removed.

The dedication ceremonies were held in the auditorium of the Buena Vista School across the street from the project. Among the speakers on the dedication program were Miss Jean Coman, Management Supervisor of the United States Housing Authority, and John C. Green, housing manager.

The local newspapers acclaimed the completion of this new project in glowing phrases. An editorial in the "Nashville Tennessean" said in part:

"There is not a citizen who will not be impressed by Cheatham Place or who cannot realize its significance. Where it stands was a warren of structures which could be called dwellings because they were lived in, but homes they were not, by any decent definition of the term. As a positive achievement, Cheatham Place raises the standard of living of the hundreds of families who will reside in its homes. . . . Environment shapes character and health. This is not to set up any such broad postulate as that our citizens will be as 'good' as their homes. But it can be asserted that our community will be improved in the intangibles which make for healthful and happy living by the improvement of its material surroundings."

A Special Message to Readers

It is the purpose of this BULLETIN to report on events of interest to managers of housing developments in all parts of country. Because the editorial office is in New York City, it is naturally easier to obtain news items about local housing projects and local events. We are anxious, however, to avoid having the BULLETIN appear to be devoted primarily to housing on the eastern seaboard.

We therefore solicit the cooperation of readers in other parts of the country in supplying newsworthy items.

GREENDALE RENTALS

Greendale, a 3,000 acre suburban housing project of the Farm Security Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, will be occupied by 572 families at an average charge of \$5.91 per room per month. This development, located at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, includes a greater number of single houses than any other public housing project. The average room on which the rental rate is based has a greater floor area than other comparable housing projects.

Starting at a minimum of \$19.00 per month for a one-bedroom apartment and extending to a maximum of \$36.00 per month for a four-bedroom house, the average monthly basic rent will be \$29.16.

Each housing unit is surrounded by approximately 5,000 square feet of ground, providing space for gardens, trees and shrubbery. In addition to its own yard, each family may have additional ground in allotment gardens located within easy walking distance of the dwellings. The houses themselves vary in size and architectural design. Each has hardwood floors, copper plumbing, modern kitchen and bath, and large closet space. All are thoroughly insulated.

The objectives of the management in setting up the rents as established are:

1. To make the homes in Greendale available to families of moderate income.
2. To derive sufficient revenue to meet the costs of operating and maintaining the buildings and providing municipal services and schools.
3. To return as much as possible of the annual receipts to the federal government.

Analysis of registration cards of the 2,500 families already signifying a desire to live in Greendale substantiate the need for housing for families of moderate income.

In order to assure that the opportunities afforded to residents of Greendale go to the families who need its benefits, occupancy will be restricted generally to families within the income range of \$1,000 to \$2,200 per year. In special cases individuals with incomes of less than \$1,000 may be accepted. Consideration also will be given in special cases to large families with slightly higher incomes. Within these limits the maximum income of families to be accepted for the various units will be related to the rents of the dwellings, so

that the least expensive units will be reserved for families with lowest incomes. No families will be accepted who would be ineligible under the income limitations prescribed in the recently enacted Wagner-Steagall Housing Act.



Mrs. Roosevelt at Lakeview Terrace

When this picture was taken just before the Christmas holidays at Lakeview Terrace, in Cleveland, Ohio, a member of the management staff of that project stated that it was "a record of one of the red-letter days at Lakeview Terrace."

LANDLORD-TENANT RELATIONS

In the February 1938 issue of the "Housing Quarterly," published by the Philadelphia Housing Association, a timely discussion appears under the heading "Landlord-Tenant Relations." In view of the special attention which this subject has been receiving recently, in New York City and elsewhere, largely as a result of the threatening housing shortage, the following statement seems particularly significant and may be suggestive to others who are faced with similar problems:

"In order to improve relations between landlord and tenant, Mayor S. Davis Wilson appointed, during the year, a Landlord-Tenant Relations Board to take care of rent strikes among Negroes.

"However, according to a recent report submitted to the Mayor by Dr. W. Harry Barnes, Director of this Board, about one-third of the strikes settled during the last few months were among white tenants.

"The report further states that in the majority of controversies friendly relations were established between the landlord and his tenant.

"Dr. Barnes declares that the Philadelphia Real Estate Board has been of great help to the Landlord-Tenant Relations Board and is beginning an educational campaign among the real estate brokers to bring about a more brotherly attitude in their transactions with tenants."

STORE RENTALS REDUCED AT NEW YORK CITY PROJECTS

Alfred Rheinstein, Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, announced early this month that rents on stores in Harlem and Williamsburg, the two federal projects being managed by the Authority, had been reduced fifty percent.

The reduction will be retroactive to February 1st and will remain in effect until August 31st, at which time it is hoped the emergency conditions will have been relieved. It is believed that the storekeepers met with financial difficulties largely because they were confronted with a situation to which they were unaccustomed. It is probable that their merchandise was not of the proper type to capture the particular trade of the development, and their prices were too high. The original rents were higher than the neighborhood seemed to warrant, although they were exceedingly low for the type of store which the PWA built.

MEMPHIS OPENS TWO PUBLIC PROJECTS

In January the U.S. Housing Authority announced the following rentals for Lauderdale Courts and Dixie Homes, the two projects in Memphis, Tennessee, which house 449 and 633 families, respectively:

Average base rent -	
	\$4.61 per room per month
Average utility charge -	
	1.17 per room per month
TOTAL	\$5.78 per room per month

The projects are to be operated by the Memphis Housing Authority on a lease that will probably go into effect about April 1st, when it is expected that the projects will be 90% occupied. The lease runs until June 30, 1939.

Average gross rents for Lauderdale Courts range from 2 rooms at \$16.40 per month to 5 rooms at \$27.90 per month.

The schedule for the Dixie Homes ranges from 2 rooms at \$13.33 per month to 5 rooms at \$22.75 per month. The Dixie Homes project is intended for Negro occupancy.

The Memphis Housing Authority held open house at both projects beginning January 15th and announced that it would continue as long as visitors warranted the exhibition of the projects.

SOME NOTES ON CHICAGO'S PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECTS

When the Chicago Housing Authority took over the three federal projects in that city -- the Jane Addams Houses, the Julia C. Lathrop Homes, the Trumbull Park Homes -- there were a number of PWA management employees on the housing staff. The Authority adopted the policy of firing no one and giving everyone a chance to demonstrate what he could do in the job to which he had been assigned. As weaknesses developed, individuals were shifted or discharged. Up to the present time, all of the top people have been retained. Most of the changes have been in tenant selection or maintenance personnel.

An unusually attractive leaflet was recently published, describing Chicago's three new public housing developments. It was designed by Arthur Bohnen for the Chicago Housing Authority. Its wide distribution through schools, churches, settlement houses, parks and playground centers helped enormously to counteract certain misunderstandings and hostile propaganda. After its distribution applications for tenancy increased greatly within a very short time.

The leaflet includes photographs and drawings and is not crowded with too much written material. The use of black and red ink adds to its readability, as does the larger-than-average-size type. NAHO distributed copies to all local housing authorities. Additional copies are available from the Chicago Housing Authority, 35 East Wacker Drive, Chicago, for 10¢ in stamps.

Because of lack of space in this issue publication of the reading list promised in the last issue has been postponed.